

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION INVENTORY

LOCATION AND ACCESS

Fitchburg is located in the Montachusett region in northern Worcester County, bordering Leominster, Westminster, Ashburnham, Ashby, and Lunenburg. Route 2, a four-lane, limited access state highway, is the major east-west route through the region, and runs along the city’s southern boundary. This highway connects Fitchburg with I-495 and greater Boston to the east, and western Massachusetts and upstate New York to the west. Other State routes through the city include 31, 12, and 2A. Route 31 connects with Route 13 just outside the city’s eastern boundary, and both continue north, providing access to southern New Hampshire. A number of arterial roads provide access to Route 2 from Fitchburg. I-190 ends at Route 2 in Leominster, connecting the region with Worcester.

The physical layout of Fitchburg was largely determined by its development as a 19th century industrial city. The presence of the Nashua River and the numerous rail lines which ended here led to a booming industrial economy. The transportation needs of this time were met by locating most of the industrial development and housing in a small, crescent-shaped area in the center of town, adjacent to the river, allowing those who worked in the factories to walk to their places of business. Numerous rail roads were built to service these factories, further solidifying

these development patterns. Subsequent development in Fitchburg thus followed patterns which were based around pedestrian and rail traffic, creating a transportation and circulation system which does not meet the needs of the automobile-centered development which has occurred over the last 60 years.

The inability of the current infrastructure to provide sufficient access to Intown Fitchburg from Route 2 has been acknowledged at various levels of the city government for over twenty years. From Route 2, there are five full-access interchanges which lead to the City: Route 13 through Leominster and Lunenburg, Route 12 through Leominster, Route 31, Whalom/South Street, and Route 2A through Westminster. Each of these roads is a two-lane commercial or industrial strip. As these roads are forced to handle significantly more traffic than was intended when they were built, smaller local roads, including Mt. Elam Road and Rollstone Road, are often used as commercial and commuter routes into Fitchburg. The Mt. Elam Road interchange is scheduled to be upgraded to a full access interchange in MRPC’s Transportation Improvement Plan for the year 2000. Since most of the traffic entering Fitchburg comes from the east, Route 12, Route 13 and South Street are the most commonly used gateways to the city. Route 12, Route 13, and the portion of South Street adjacent to Route 2 are characterized by dense commercial development with a large number of curb cuts. Furthermore, Route 12 and South Street bisect heavily populated residential

neighborhoods, further contributing to congestion and safety problems. The inconvenience and unattractiveness of the city's gateways put Fitchburg at a disadvantage in its attempt to attract and retain businesses. There is support throughout the city that improved access to Intown should be a priority. The Massachusetts Highway Department has formed two task forces to investigate the options for a Downtown Connector.



The city's "Gateways" create a negative first impression.

LOCAL CIRCULATION

TOPOGRAPHY

Fitchburg's hilly terrain has a significant impact on travel. Much of the City is built on steep grades. This is especially true of the residential neighborhoods adjoining the Central Business District, and in the more remote areas of northern Fitchburg. Compounding the difficulty is the fact that most of the older neighborhoods are built around short, narrow streets with structures built up to the sidewalk. The street network in these areas is thus characterized by numerous intersections, little opportunity for widening, and an extreme vulnerability to winter conditions. Traditionally, the transportation needs of those living in these areas were met through a complex pedestrian infrastructure, including paths through wooded areas and sidewalks.

CONGESTION

The map "Traffic Volumes" depicts traffic volumes on Fitchburg's major roads, with greater volumes indicated by a wider buffer. Data from MRPC's Traffic Counting Program was used to determine traffic volumes. The heavier shading on Lunenburg, Water, and South Streets demonstrates that most of the traffic entering Fitchburg arrives from the east.

Two areas are identified in MRPC's Regional Transportation Plan as having more traffic than current facilities can accommodate; Water Street, which is the main entrance to the city, and the Main Street/Boulder Drive loop.

BRIDGES

As the densest part of Fitchburg is bisected by the Nashua River, the efficient and reliable functioning of the city's bridges is a priority for local circulation. A table (located in Appendix Bridge), taken from MRPC's 1997 Regional Transportation Plan, includes the roadway served by the bridge, the feature under the bridge, its ownership, historical status, year built, the classification of the roadway, and the bridge's rating according to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

The Fifth Street Bridge, an historic bridge which linked the Patch to the South Side, has significant structural deficiencies and has been closed since 1995. This project is included as a megaproject in MRPC's Transportation Improvement Program, and construction is expected to begin in 1998. The Rollstone Bridge, counted by the state as two bridges, is currently being replaced. It is expected to reopen for traffic in 1998. Replacement of the Townsend Street Bridge over Baker Brook is included in the TIP for Fiscal Year 1997.

According to the City Engineer, the Commercial Street Bridge, listed by Mass Highway as city-owned, is actually privately owned. Also, the Bemis road bridge is in excellent condition, having been replaced in the early 1990s. The poor rating provided on this chart has likely not been updated since the replacement.

INTOWN CIRCULATION

In 1967, the City reconfigured the roadways in the Intown Central Business District, making Main Street and Boulder Drive two lane, one-way arteries from the Upper Common to the Depot Square area. Several smaller roads between and radiating off of Main Street and Boulder Drive were also converted to one-way travel. The purpose of this project was to facilitate movement through the downtown area. To this end it has been successful, but there have been considerable costs associated with the new traffic pattern. Speeds approaching 35 mph are common on Main Street, and Boulder Drive travel approaches 40 mph. Besides concerns about vehicle and pedestrian safety, having two lanes of high speed traffic makes the Main Street area much less welcoming to pedestrians, thus decreasing its value as a retail zone. For reasons of safety, convenience of parking, and consumer perception, many in the Intown community consider this situation unacceptable within a commercial district. The City is currently in the process of reviewing plans to return Main Street to two-way traffic and to take steps to increase the number of parking spaces where they are needed most. General Electric

had expressed concern about converting Boulder Drive to two way travel, as it would likely decrease parking for their employees and increase traffic volume, limiting access and possibly impacting employee safety. These concerns remain, despite GE’s announcement that they are closing this facility, as changing the flow of traffic on Boulder Drive may undermine the city’s efforts to find a tenant for the site.

PARKING

Adequate parking facilities are one of the most basic requirements for a functional Central Business District. Parking in Downtown is provided by the City and by Pride, Inc. There are 3,005 parking spaces usable for downtown business, as described by the following table.

Partial funding has been secured to refurbish the Main Street Parking Garage, and the city is pursuing additional monies for this project. Though downtown parking is currently considered adequate, future residential development in the area may strain available facilities, as many Intown buildings lack off street parking.

Despite a ban on overnight parking on city streets between the months of November and April, most residential areas require on-street parking to meet the needs of those who live in the neighborhood. Though the adequacy of parking varies from place to place, certain neighborhoods, including those around

DOWNTOWN PARKING

	On-Street	Off-Street
Public, Metered	827	46
Public, Non-Metered	351	735
Private	0	1,046*
Totals	1,178	1,827

*This number includes 300 spaces in Pride Inc.’s Main Street garage, of which approximately 100 are located on the closed second level.

Fitchburg State College and residential neighborhoods off of Main Street, as well as other congested areas, are not adequately served by the current parking facilities. There is competition for parking spaces between those who live in the neighborhoods and those who come there for business.

As part of the North Street improvements, Fitchburg State College has proposed constructing a parking lot and a garage on North Street to serve the student population. It is hoped that the provision of this parking will alleviate some of the demand for on-street parking in the College neighborhood. The Greater Arlington Street Neighborhood Association, working with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, has implemented a custom parking plan for the Arlington Street neighborhood. It

is recognized that any successful parking strategy will require the consideration of the unique parking issues in each area of the city, as well as a commitment to the enforcement of parking regulations.

PUBLIC SAFETY ACCIDENTS BY YEAR¹

Accidents	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Fatal Accidents	3	1	1	2	1	3	2	3	2
Personal Injury	328	323	286	270	278	258	362	293	250
Property Damage	1238	1212	1110	946	886	1061	1123	1300	1187
Hit & Run	328	367	341	235	218	220	242	198	231
Pedestrians, Mopeds/Bikes	40	34	57	63	47	72	64	49	61
Total	1937	1937	1795	1525	1430	1614	1793	1843	1731

¹All data from the Fitchburg Police Department's 1992 and 1996 Annual Reports

ACCIDENTS BY INTERSECTION

Location	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
John Fitch Highway & Lunenburg St.	44	26	39	30	20	25	19	35	28
Main, Rollstone & Academy Streets	21	21	19	16	13	9	12	15	10
John Fitch Highway & Summer St	23	20	34	19	25	18	22	35	23
Summer & Harvard Streets	8	7	13	8	10	9	5	5	2
Electric Ave. & South St.	13	16	18	7	11	2	9	11	12
Main, Day, & Water Streets	9	15	8	10	5	7	5	14	2
River & Wallace Streets	9	10	6	9	3	3	7	4	6
Main & North Streets	8	7	9	5	7	11	13	16	19
Main & Snow Streets	8	7	9	5	3	5	9	3	3
John Fitch Highway & Pearl St.	9	6	7	8	7	11	9	10	14

ACCIDENTS BY STREET

Street	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
John Fitch Highway	190	196	78	64	148	119	110	110	101
Main Street	152	134	51	95	156	148	139	128	107
Lunenburg Street	114	74	44	45	57	75	78	89	63
Water Street	62	55	28	47	121	119	140	98	75
Bemis Road	83	52	30	28	20	35	35	50	26
South Street	64	43	24	37	82	57	70	60	33
Summer Street	61	52	30	43	46	32	43	45	28
Kimball Street	45	31	13	9	22	26	36	28	19
Westminster Street	38	27	28	17	27	32	41	36	28
River Street	33	31	28	47	43	33	51	34	37

John Fitch Highway and Main Street continue to see the highest number of accidents. While the heavy volume of traffic on these roads is a significant factor in the high rate of accidents which occur at these locations, infrastructural deficiencies play a role as well. The speed of travel on Main Street is too high for a pedestrian-heavy district. The configuration of Main Street undoubtedly contributes to this increased speed. The intersection of John Fitch and Summer Street currently lacks left-turn arrows

for those turning onto John Fitch from either direction. A significant number of accidents at this intersection occur when cars turning left pull out in front of oncoming traffic. The John Fitch/Summer Street intersection is also directly adjacent to Bemis Road, another high-incident location. As residential and commercial development on John Fitch continues, other intersections may become trouble spots. The locations where the John Fitch Highway meets major roads coming from Intown,

such as Mechanic Street and North Street among others, will bear watching over the next 20 years.

The rise in accidents, during a period of overall decrease, at the Main Street/North Street intersection is problematic. The opening of North Street to two way traffic, increased activity at a nearby drive-through, and general increase in the use of North Street may explain this increase.

The large number of pedestrians crossing Main Street in this area to access the Commuter Rail raises additional safety concerns. The North Street Corridor improvements being carried out by the City and Fitchburg State College can be expected to increase traffic volume all along North Street, with heavy impacts expected where North Street intersects Main Street, and at Pearl Street. Plans for the new fire station on North Street include the installation of a traffic light at North and Main.

The College Neighborhood is characterized by congestion due to heavy pedestrian usage. Two high-capacity dormitories are located across North Street from the rest of the campus. During the school year, a crossing guard is stationed at the intersection of North and Pearl Streets to regulate traffic associated with the McKay School on Rindge Road; otherwise, the intersection,

which is also joined by Clinton Street, is controlled only by stop signs on North Street and Clinton Street. The increased volume

using North Street is expected to worsen the situation at this intersection.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The percentage of Fitchburg residents without access to an automobile is significantly higher than that of the region, county, and state.² As development patterns have changed, and places of business have increasingly been located away from Fitchburg's center, the area in which most of those without automobiles live, the need for an effective public transportation system has grown. The hub of Fitchburg's public transit system is the Montachusett Area Regional Transit Authority (MART)'s Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC), which opened in October of 1996. Located at 100 Main Street, the ITC links together the Commuter Rail, regional bus service, a national bus line, and taxi service. The ITC currently has parking for 70 vehicles, with an expansion dependent upon the acquisition of nearby property, allowing it to serve as a park and ride facility for commuters. The second level of the building contains MART offices.

Rail access between Fitchburg and Boston's North Station is provided by the Fitchburg/South Acton Line of the MBTA's Commuter Rail system. Because of the numerous stations along the line, the commute averages 90 minutes each way. On

²1990 U.S. Census data

weekdays, ten passenger trains per day arrive and depart from Fitchburg. These trains are scheduled for commuters who travel from Fitchburg towards Boston. Four trains depart Fitchburg during morning peak hours (approximately 7 to 10 AM) and three arrive during evening peak hours (approximately 4 to 6 PM). However, no trains arrive in Fitchburg during the morning peak or depart during the evening peak, severely limiting the line's usefulness for those commuting to the region from the east. Minimal service is provided during non-peak hours. Six trains per day access Fitchburg on Saturdays, and four on Sundays.



Over half of the rail commuters from Fitchburg walk to the train.

Fares from Fitchburg to North Station are \$4.75 each way, \$47.50 for a 12-ride pass, or \$136 for a monthly pass.

The MBTA instituted an advanced schedule from Fitchburg to Boston in August of 1997, utilizing an express schedule which made fewer stops in Boston's suburbs, cutting 30 minutes from the 90 minute trip. This experiment was successful, in that ridership increased during this period. However, due to funding priorities, the MBTA was unable to incorporate this schedule into its service full time. A bill has been filed in the state legislature to purchase a train for the MBTA which would be used to implement the advanced schedule permanently.

Currently, trains arriving in Fitchburg stop behind Montuori Tire, several hundred feet down Main Street from the Intermodal Center. The distance between the station and the platform leads to passengers missing trains, and thus discourages ridership. A handicapped-accessible platform is scheduled to be constructed in 1998.

MART provides bus service within and between Fitchburg and Leominster via three lines; the Main Line (2 busses per day), the Circle Line (2), and the Fitchburg Loop (1). Each of these lines passes through the ITC. MART also provides service between Fitchburg and Mt. Wachussett Community College in Gardner, from which riders can connect to Gardner's citywide bus system.

Use of MART busses is extensive, with approximately 425,000

passengers transported each year. Fares are \$0.75 for adults and \$0.35 for elderly, Medicare, disabled, and student riders. Monthly passes are available for \$16.00, or \$12.00 for elderly, disabled, veteran, or student riders. Children under five may ride for free with an adult. In 1995, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), which runs MART, issued a survey to its riders. The results indicate that most riders are satisfied with the service provided by MART, and that most of those who use MART do so as their primary mode of transportation. The greatest source of dissatisfaction with the system is the lack of bus service in the evenings and on weekends.

MART also operates several programs to provide transportation for the elderly and disabled. Dial-A-MART service is designed to provide transportation in conjunction with social service programs and agencies, such as the Department of Transitional Assistance, Council on Aging, and Headstart. Fixed route paratransit service is provided in conjunction with the Fitchburg/Leominster line, and within Gardner. Commuter service is also provided between Fitchburg and Gardner during peak commute hours. The Disability Commission reports a need for increased paratransit service during evenings and weekends.

The MART budget for fiscal year 1997 is \$15.6 million. Sources of that funding can be found in the following table.

ASSESSMENT BY COMMUNITY

Community	FY96 Audit
Fitchburg	\$344,979
Leominster	\$330,734
Gardner	\$113,846
Littleton	\$16,268
Sterling	\$15,466
Hardwick	\$11,633
Westminster	\$14,431
Lunenburg	\$9,780
Ayer	\$9,613
Lancaster	\$7,874
Ashburnham	\$7,733
Shirley	\$11,221
Hubbardston	\$13,478
Templeton	\$5,996

ANTICIPATED MART FUNDING, FY 1997

Source	Amount	% of Total
Projects Contracted from State Agencies	@\$10.4 Million	66.7%
Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (State DOT)	@\$2.6 Million	16.7%
Program Income (Fares, etc.)	@\$1.2 Million	7.6%
Assessment of Member Communities	@\$1.0 Million	6.7%
Federal Transit Administration	@\$0.4 Million	2.3%
Total	@\$15.6 Million	100%

Fitchburg’s assessment is approximately 38% of the total assessments for the region.

Extra-regional bus service is provided by Peter Pan, which provides service from the ITC to Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and New York City. Three busses leave on this route per day. Vermont Transit Lines provides service to Montreal. Two busses per day on this route stop at Bickford’s Family Restaurant in Leominster, at the Marshall’s Plaza at the intersection of Routes 2 and 12.

Taxi service is regulated by city ordinance, and by licenses, issued by the Licensing Board. Taxis may not patrol the streets looking for fares, so all cab service is contracted by telephone. The only taxi stand in the city is located at the Intermodal Center. Licenses, which are renewed annually, specify the number of cabs which may be operated. There are currently five licensed taxi companies in Fitchburg, with a total of 26 cabs. Police are authorized by ordinance to inspect cabs for safety when licenses are renewed. Taxi companies in Fitchburg provide service both within the city, and throughout the region.

AIR SERVICE

Fitchburg is well positioned in terms of access to airports. Logan International Airport in Boston, which services airlines and very large freight carriers, is slightly over one hour’s drive away. A medium sized airport, Worcester Municipal Airport, is located

approximately 30 minutes away. The Fitchburg Municipal Airport (FMA), located in the southeast corner of the city near Routes 2 and 13, handles the bulk of all aircraft operations within Fitchburg itself. It is classified as a General Aviation facility, allowing it to serve all aviation activities except for large airlines. FMA's service area is the entire Montachusett region, giving it a service population of nearly 200,000. Major uses of the airport include business travel, movement of freight, and recreational use. Business travel consists mostly of the movements of consultants, technicians, and others between the Montachusett region and other facilities. Despite being less than a mile from Route 2, access to the Airport from the highway is indirect and requires the use of local roads.

All air travel to and from Fitchburg is regulated by the Fitchburg Airport Commission. In 1990, the Airport Commission issued its Airport Master Plan Update, which included Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) projections showing FMA increasing its total number of movements, its number of based aircraft, and its percentage of the New England market. This growth was delayed by the recession of the early 1990s. Air travel is typically one of the first expenses cut and the last to recover from economic downturns. Currently, the Airport processes 70-80,000 movements annually, down from a peak of 129,000 in 1989. One movement represents one landing and one takeoff. Aircraft based at FMA total 122, down from 139 in 1989, and include propeller driven craft, jets, and turboprop. Trends indicate that these losses will be recovered, and that this growth will occur throughout the

envisioned period. Air travel is a growth industry, and as major urban airports, such as Logan, become increasingly busy and difficult to access, small and medium sized facilities such as FMA are expected to absorb much of the growth. The total number of movements, number of based aircraft, and FMA's percentage of the New England market are all expected to rise in coming years.

Airport facilities are capable of absorbing this growth without major improvements. An engineering study done in 1987 listed



FMA's annual service volume at 228,315. Airport usage is not expected to reach this volume within the foreseeable future. A satellite-based GPS (Global Positioning System) was recently

installed, providing the region with landing facilities which will remain up-to-date throughout the envisioned period. All airfield facilities are rated in good to excellent condition, with the exception of Taxiway Charlie, which is cracked though still usable. FMA's runways, both in excellent condition, have dimensions of 4508'x100' and 3505'x75'. These lengths allow FMA to accommodate planes with capacities of up to 19 passengers, including the largest business jets in use. In emergency situations, large commercial jets, such as Boeing's 727, can land at the Airport. Of the other airports in the vicinity, only Worcester can provide similar accommodations. The terminal building, which does not currently meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, contains a restaurant, administrative offices, and room for a tower.

Besides the Airport, there are three other facilities in Fitchburg which handle air traffic. The Airport operates a helicopter landing facility on Benson Street. Its usage is similar to that of the Airport, with its primary users being businesses moving freight or personnel. Burbank Hospital recently relocated its helipad to its lower parking lot. This facility is used to transport emergency patients from Burbank to UMass and Boston. General Electric on Boulder Drive and American Holographic on River Street have helipads on the roofs of their buildings.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Emergency-related information is available from the Civil Fitchburg Municipal Airport allows easy air access.

Defense office and Fire Department. The Fire Department's Bureau of Fire Prevention is given review of many project, including special permit requests and subdivision plans.

Fitchburg Municipal Airport's location and capacity serve to enhance the city's emergency preparedness by allowing swift access for material and emergency workers. Its snow removal equipment is effective enough to allow FMA to act as a reception point for emergency deliveries even if ground access is unavailable due to winter storms.

FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION

The movement of freight by rail was one of the driving forces of Fitchburg's development. As a result, the Montachusett region has a significant rail infrastructure in place, mostly in a crescent shaped area adjacent to the Nashua. While some of these lines continue to be used by MBTA and various freight operators, many others are legally or practically abandoned. Conrail recently sold a long-unused line adjacent to the Nashua to CSX. The City of Fitchburg has expressed interest in utilizing this right-of-way as a bikeway, riverwalk, or some other recreational resource, or as part of the Downtown

Connector Project. Both the renewed use of its abandoned railways and the conversion of those railways to other uses would benefit Fitchburg, as the abandonment of these lines has led to physical deterioration, unattractiveness, and safety and vandalism concerns.

Resins and other products related to the production of plastic constitute by far the largest segment of freight brought into Fitchburg, and plastics and plastic products represent the largest portion of outgoing freight, both by volume and by dollar value. The RVJ Corporation operates a railyard next to Guilford’s rail lines which serves as the primary point of entry to the region for plastics materials. At this site, plastic pellets are transferred from rail to truck for distribution throughout New England, New York, and New Jersey.

General Electric utilizes rail to ship steam turbines from its Boulder Drive plant to locations throughout the country. Rail is the preferred method due to its lower costs. However, the Hoosatic Tunnel in western Massachusetts is too small for many of the turbines, requiring them to be shipped by truck. This restriction has had a serious impact on industrial development throughout New England.

The movement of freight by truck remains the most popular method of shipping material in the region. This method allows for door-to-door service and more flexible scheduling than rail shipments. However, there are a number of problems associated

with this method. Large trucks cause significant wear-and-tear on roads, increase traffic congestion, and contribute to poor air quality. The presence of trucks in dense areas such as Intown raises considerable safety and traffic concerns on Main Street, Boulder Drive, and Elm Street, especially since Fitchburg lacks alleys between its commercial buildings, forcing drivers to park on the street to make deliveries.

ALTERNATE MODES

Bicycle and pedestrian travel is becoming increasingly popular nationwide, as commuters’ desire to avoid heavy automobile traffic is reinforced by a growing environmental awareness. A significant number of Fitchburg residents use bicycles as their primary mode of transportation, weather permitting. There are three classes of bicycle routes. Class I includes rights-of-way which are physically separate from automotive and pedestrian traffic, such as a paved path through the woods. Class II includes rights-of-way within which through travel by automobiles and pedestrians is not allowed, but vehicle parking and crossing, such as to enter a driveway, is allowed. An example of a Class II Bikeway would be a bike lane along a street, separated from passing automobiles by a line. Class III Bikeways are rights-of-way which are shared by bicycles and automotive or pedestrian traffic, in which parking is not allowed.

The city currently has two implemented bicycle routes, and proposals exist for several others. The map “Proposed and Existing Bike Paths” shows bicycle routes implemented and

planned for Fitchburg. In addition to the portion shown, the Parkhill/Coggshall Park Bikeway has been completed. This facility, which includes Class I and Class II facilities, links two of the city's most used recreational facilities, and is used almost exclusively for recreation. A Class II bike lane was created along Rindge Road from Mechanic Street past the McKay School to North Street.

A number of proposals to extend Fitchburg's bikeways are under consideration. The North Street Corridor improvements would add a Class II Bikeway along both sides of North Street, for the purpose of providing bicycle and skating access from the FSC campus to Intown. The continuation of the Rindge Road bikeway to the North/Pearl Street intersection, and the addition of a bikeway along John Fitch Highway from Rindge Road to Coolidge Park, and then along Pearl Street to North, would create a loop from the FSC campus through some of the more rural areas of the city.

The cities of Leominster and Fitchburg have jointly proposed a route which would follow the railroad right-of-way adjacent to Route 12, then continue into the Lower Main Street area via Sawyer Passway, near the end of the North Street bikeway. This project would provide a route between the downtowns of Fitchburg and Leominster, with access to the Intermodal Transportation Center at 100 Main Street. This railroad line was recently sold to CSX by Conrail.

The Nashua River Watershed Association has proposed including a bikeway in its Greenway project. The Nashua River Bikeway, which would include Class I and II bikeways, would connect the urban areas of Fitchburg and Leominster with that of Clinton, and provide a recreational and commuter resource within an envisioned green space along the Nashua. As a unique regional system, this project would qualify for significant state funding. Other proposals have included bikeways along Routes 12, 31, 2A, and John Fitch Highway.

A safe and appealing pedestrian infrastructure is essential for Fitchburg's success. The John Fitch Highway, an example of standard commercial strip development, is considered both unsafe and unpleasant for pedestrian traffic. Few sidewalks and crosswalks, stores set far back from the street behind huge parking lots, and high speeds of travel on the road discourage pedestrians.

New developments in Fitchburg are required under the Zoning Ordinance to install sidewalks on both sides of any new streets. In the past, the city has encouraged developers to install only one sidewalk in the subdivision, and to extend it outside of the development to link with existing sidewalks. Pedestrian links between new developments and existing neighborhoods and stores benefit city residents and businesses. As a city with a high number of residents who do not drive, Fitchburg must work to be pedestrian friendly.

As new transportation technologies are created and dispersed, it is essential that Fitchburg's transportation system remain up-to-date. MRPC is studying the installation of electric car rechargers at the ITC, and the purchase of electric busses for MART. The creation of a bikeway along the Nashua to Leominster would also create a land bank, allowing for the installation of new systems as they become available. Because predicting new technologies is often impossible, the key to capitalizing on the opportunities they present is to remain informed about new developments, and to be flexible enough to incorporate new modes and technologies into the existing system.

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GATEWAYS

Improve the entries into Fitchburg to serve as dignified, attractive, welcoming and efficient gateways into the community.

- Repair and maintain the roadways, sidewalks, and curbs.
- Minimize the number and presence of billboards.
- Create a system of clear, informative, uncluttered directional and street signs which identifies routes and destinations, and enhances the appearance of the area.
- Involve residents, businesses, and property owners along the gateways in planning and implementing improvements.

CIRCULATION

Improve the circulation of cars, pedestrians, bicycles, and public transportation, including cross street circulation and intersections, with minimal negative impacts to residents.

ALTERNATIVE FORMS

Encourage the use of alternative forms of transportation, including bicycle and public transit, to reduce traffic, alleviate parking demands, improve air quality, and enhance public safety.

- Provide an alternative system of access between the downtowns of Fitchburg and Leominster.
- Work at the local, regional, and state level to encourage

the integration of cleaner and safer technologies into the existing transportation system.

- Encourage connections between various modes of travel. For example, establish safe routes for residents to walk or bicycle to catch the commuter train.
- Improve commuter rail service to and from Fitchburg.
- Work with private concerns to implement improved modes of transportation.
- Increase use and awareness of MART among city residents and students at Fitchburg State College.

SAFETY AND AMENITY

Improve the safety and amenity of public streets for vehicular and pedestrian travel.

- Investigate traffic calming techniques in areas with known hazards due to inappropriately high vehicular speeds.
- Redesign problem areas and intersections when necessary.
- Establish, maintain, and improve sidewalks in areas of pedestrian and vehicular conflict.
- Encourage pedestrian-friendly design in new developments.
- Improve the appearance and utility of directional and street signs throughout the city.
- Work with business and property owners to improve the appearance and placement of private signs so as to decrease confusion and clutter.

- Improve coordination of parking and traffic enforcement.
- Investigate methods of enhancing snow removal procedures.
- Examine the impact of current street alignment on access and internal circulation in Downtown, and implement improvements when needed.
- Reduce the speed of travel on Main Street.
- Schedule and conduct the repair of bridges so as to create the least disruption of traffic flow possible.
- Promote the use of public transportation, and take advantage of the opportunities it provides for adding vitality to the Intown area.
- Investigate improvements that can be made to the existing pedestrian infrastructure, and alternative modes of pedestrian travel.

ACCESS

Provide better access to Intown Fitchburg.

- Improve the connections between Route 2 and downtown.
- Identify and prioritize the problems with the current system of access, and the desired benefits of a new system.
- Promote alternative access routes into the city.

PARKING

Implement and enforce parking plans in neighborhoods with parking deficiencies to provide sufficient spaces for local residents, visitors, and business people; enhance pedestrian

amenities; and provide for the safe and efficient movement of vehicles. Investigate methods of decreasing the usage of on-street parking spaces by Fitchburg State College students.

Support the development of alternative revenue sources at Fitchburg Municipal Airport, consistent with the 1990 Airport Master Plan.

Provide adequate staffing for transportation needs.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION**

- Produce a Gateway Plan
 - a. Define the gateways into the city and establish priority gateways.
 - b. Adopt site plan review for the gateways to improve the appearance of the main corridors into the City and to improve access into the City.
 - c. Develop a streetscape plan for the gateways.
 - d. Establish property maintenance standards, and initiate a program of beautification awards.
 - e. Replace existing signage. New signage should identify routes to specified locations, and enhance the appearance of the streetscape.
 - f. Investigate updating the timing and placement of traffic signals.
 - g. Where practical, eliminate overhead wiring in high-visibility locations.
 - h. Investigate the construction of a Downtown

Connector. Any construction by state agencies should take place as part of a coordinated plan, in order to assure that the maximum benefit is achieved with minimal negative impact to residents and businesses.

- C. Revise the sidewalk requirement in the city’s subdivision regulations.
 - a. Require the installation of sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities in new developments which connect to existing sidewalks.
 - b. Allow the installation of off-site sidewalks or improvement of existing sidewalks instead of requiring sidewalks within the subdivision, at the discretion of the Planning Board.
- Lobby the MBTA to provide an express route for commuter service from the Intermodal Transportation Center to North Station along the Fitchburg route of the Commuter Rail.
- Replace the winter parking ban with a snow emergency ordinance. Install signage designating “No Parking During Snow Emergency.”
- Increase penalties for multiple violations of parking ordinances.

- Increase enforcement of regulations reserving parking spaces for the disabled.
- Utilize the city's Geographic Information System to advise City Council in clear and concise methods of transportation issues.
- Increase the involvement of the Department of Public Works in planning transportation projects. Have the Commissioner of Public Works or his designee attend MRPC and MPC meetings, as well as other pertinent meetings.
- Develop a network of bike ways, including a recreational and commuter route between the downtowns of Fitchburg and Leominster.
- Implement custom parking plans for neighborhoods when a consensus exists among area residents, businesses and the city that the proposed plan adequately addresses parking, safety, snow removal, and circulation needs.
- Establish Priority Snow Removal Routes for neighborhoods located on steep slopes.
- Investigate how to provide safe pedestrian routes to the Intermodal Center and the Central Plaza. An important first step will be improving the pedestrian way across Lower Main Street at North Street.
- Provide shelters at all bus stops.
- Improve coordination between parking enforcement and snow removal activities.
- Make improvements to existing gateways to improve access to Intown Fitchburg. Utilize signage to designate a beltway from Route 2 past the downtown area and back.
- Create and fund the position of Traffic Specialist to coordinate parking and traffic enforcement, the planning and design of improvements, and other activities related to the circulation of vehicles.
- Work with Fitchburg State College to create a transportation plan for the college neighborhood. The scope of this plan should include the following:
 - a. Identify the parking needs of residents, on-campus students, commuter students, students who reside in the neighborhood, faculty, and visitors.
 - b. Develop policies by the city, MART, and FSC to increase awareness and use of public transportation by students living on campus, in

other parts of the city, and outside of Fitchburg. Including promotion of MART busses during orientation is a vital first step.

- c. Produce a policy for the provision and retention of parking spaces as the college expands.
 - d. Identify needs at the college which can be provided by MART.
 - e. Pursue funding for MART from FSC in exchange for needed services.
 - f. Expand MART's student discount to include FSC students, or provide free service for them.
- Acquire the Conrail right-of-way and protect easements to provide for alternative transportation systems between the downtowns of Fitchburg and Leominster.
 - Develop a pavement management plan. This plan should include a system for announcing upcoming improvements to affected residents. Involve neighborhood groups in publicizing these announcements.